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Problems of Modern Democracy. Political and Economic Essays.

By EDWIN LAWRENCE GODKIN. Charles Scribner's Sons.

Pp. 332. \$2.

THE editor of the *Nation* is not sweet to the average American taste, but certain of us may take him with advantage in moderate doses—preferably after meals. His view of the mission of the educated man in a democracy is that he should be a sort of political *memento mori* to the multitude. He discharges the function with a Spartan determination which frequently reacts against its purpose. Yet if Mr. Godkin is educated out of feeling with and for the multitude, he is of a type that may well be attended to by the few, and through them may profitably affect the many.

Essays published in several magazines from January 1865 to October 1896 make up the present volume. The titles are: Aristocratic Opinions of Democracy; Popular Government; Some Political and Social Aspects of the Tariff; Criminal Politics; The Economic Man; Idleness and Immorality; The Duty of Educated Men in a Democracy; Who will Pay the Bills of Socialism? The Political Situation in 1896; The Real Problems of Democracy; The Expenditures of Rich Men.

The essays from first to last are serious, strong, and judicial. They are of more than transient importance. They rise to the rank of social phenomena. They are like the atmospheric currents at a given point of observation; not at first glance revealers of general and permanent laws, but of inestimable value toward making out laws. The deliberate thoughts of a man like Mr. Godkin afford an incomparable means of acquaintance with some of the factors in our civilization. No person who is capable of considering Americans, American institutions, and American ideas as still in their apprentice years, no one who can rule out the presumption of perfection from his estimates of American conditions, can afford to ignore these criticisms of facts and forces in our national life.

Precisely because the arguments and points of view are so significant, it is important to point out that they are not final nor always tenable. For instance, Mr. Godkin becomes the spokesman of an obsolescent conception in the following (p. 172): "There is unhappily no absolute test of success in economic legislation. All that the wisest legislator can look for as a sign of his success in dealing with economic problems is a reduction in the amount of discontent among the poor. To abolish discontent among the poor completely, in any

country, is as hopeless a task as to abolish poverty, and no statesman attempts it. . . . It is here that the complexity of all sociological problems comes in to baffle the politician, and compels him, in the vast majority of cases, to legislate simply for the Economic Man, with whose needs and tendencies he is, as a rule, far more familiar than he is with the needs of the ethical man."

An unintended confession, and an excellent illustration of demand for a definite and adequate social criterion! The epithet "obsolescent" applies not particularly to the foregoing but to the whole thought of which it forms a part. Thus (p. 162): "Ethics and religion in fact constitute the disturbing forces which make possible the organization and prosperous existence of civilized states." It should be conceded in passing that "disturbing forces" is truly a happy *fin de siècle* conceit! The "constant tendency" which these forces disturb is economic self-interest. Mr. Godkin continues: "If the Economic Man were blotted out of existence, nearly all the discussions of the economists would be as empty logomachy as the attempts to reconcile fixed fate and free will."

Again (pp. 165-6): "Science means the law which regulates the succession of phenomena. . . . In all economic investigation the first inquiry is, and, so far as it is economical, must forever remain: what will the Economic Man do when brought in contact with certain selected phenomena of the physical or social world? And the more complicated the facts of the industrial and social world are, the more necessary to the economist the Economic Man is, in order to enable him to steer his way through this maze."

The naïve assumption of the old economic conception which Mr. Godkin represents is that this abstraction, the Economic Man,—that everybody now concedes to be an element of the actual man,—is the whole of actual man; and, further, that having selected certain "circumstances" or "phenomena," it is possible to discover what the actual man will do in contact with them by discovering simply what the Economic Man would do. The Economic Man is a perfectly legitimate abstraction, but reasoners of Mr. Godkin's kind implicitly claim the privilege first of abstracting him, and then of recreating him as a substitute for the whole from which he was abstracted. Mr. Godkin further remarks (p. 167): "The test of science is that it enables one to predict consequences. Until our researches have enabled us to foresee exactly what will happen if something else happens, although we may

have discovered valuable and interesting facts, we have not discovered a law." Mr. Godkin's tacit assumption is that if we find out what the Economic Man would do "if something else happens" we thereby know what the actual man would do under circumstances the economic elements of which have been calculated in the hypothesis. In fact, this desiccated specimen, the Economic Man, is merely a cadaver which lives only when it moves and has a being in combination with several other men. The Sensuous Man, the Social Man, the Intellectual Man, the Æsthetic Man, the Conscientious Man are abstractions of the actual man quite as legitimate and necessary as the Economic Man. The tendency of which one of these abstractions is the exponent is quite as constant as another, after once emerging in the order of culture, though the relative strength of the tendencies is variable. Each of these men within the actual man exerts a distinct reaction "if something else happens." To know what will take place, then, in the case of the actual man we must find out how to solve the equation of these reactions within him. We may then be in a position to calculate the relation of the resultant to the facts outside of him. For instance, the Social Man occasionally asserts himself in the actual man and reduces the Economic Man to partial abatement. He has been known to do more and harder work than the Economic Man would do, and for less wages or no wages. In this he is like the other abstractable men in the actual man. The Social Man wants prestige as constantly as the Economic Man wants price. Desire for prestige sometimes nullifies the laws of price. So does appetite, or taste, or principle, or scientific curiosity. It is belated provincialism to assume that having the formula of the Economic Man we have the equation of the actual man. The economists were unable to reach this larger outlook, even when they yearned for it with John Stuart Mill's wistfulness, until the sociologists took up the task of showing that the Economic Man can be known only in company with the actual other men in the real man.

ALBION W. SMALL.

The Story of Human Progress. By F. W. BLACKMAR, Professor of History and Sociology in the Kansas State University. Published by the author. Pp. x+375.

PROFESSOR BLACKMAR has written "an elementary treatise on the history of civilization, especially designed for those who desire a brief